

967/ Reason paying Homage to Revelation,
IN
THE CONFESSION OF A DEIST
AT
THE GATES OF DEATH:
WITH REFLECTIONS.

By JOHN COOKE, ^K
MAIDENHEAD, BERKS.

THE SECOND EDITION.

His THOUGHTS troubled him.

DANIEL.

God's holy word, once *trivial* in his view,
Now, by the voice of his *experience*, true;
No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God who makes them, heals.

COWPER.

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TO
THE READER.

READER,

THE following thoughts were delivered from the pulpit, in the same plain, unornamented style, in which they now appear in print. The circumstances attending Mr. F.'s illness, and the remarks I made on them in public, having been misrepresented, any thing like an apology for the present publication appears unnecessary. There are persons who will circulate a *known* falsehood, and endeavour to persuade themselves they are innocent, because they were not the authors of it. Their little minds are stored with an abundance of tales,

and which, if but *new*, they whisper to different companies, unanxious about the truth or the falsehood of them.

It has been asserted, strange to say ! that in my funeral discourse for Mr. F. *I had doomed him to hell*. This is a common complaint against ministers who, instead of commending the dead, endeavour to alarm the living, by preaching against their sins ; and, as it respects myself, the falsehood of it is well known to hundreds of witnesses, so that, on my own account, I do not feel the slightest uneasiness. *Doom him to hell!*—what could induce me to convey so censurable an idea ? I am not his judge, but the best friend he ever had in the world ; unless it shall appear that another person has been more faithful to him than myself. Had he, during his illness, manifested no concern about his soul, his sins, and his salvation, the hackneyed phrase would, no doubt, have been applied to him, *He died like a lamb*. In that case, indeed, I could not have entertain-

ed a scriptural hope of his salvation ; but his circumstances were widely different. He was convinced of his lost condition, and seriously concerned for the salvation of his soul, the spiritual and eternal interests of which he long had awfully neglected.

How many, alas ! do *die like lambs* ; that is, with the stupid insensibility of a beast. Blinded by sin, deluded by Satan, entertaining false notions of God and themselves, they leave the world with “ the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish.” Flattered by a deceitful heart—strengthened in their delusion by self-righteous friends, and ignorant priests, they exemplify the truth of the observation, that “ the wicked have no bands in their death,” and learn their real condition too—too late, to rectify mistakes.

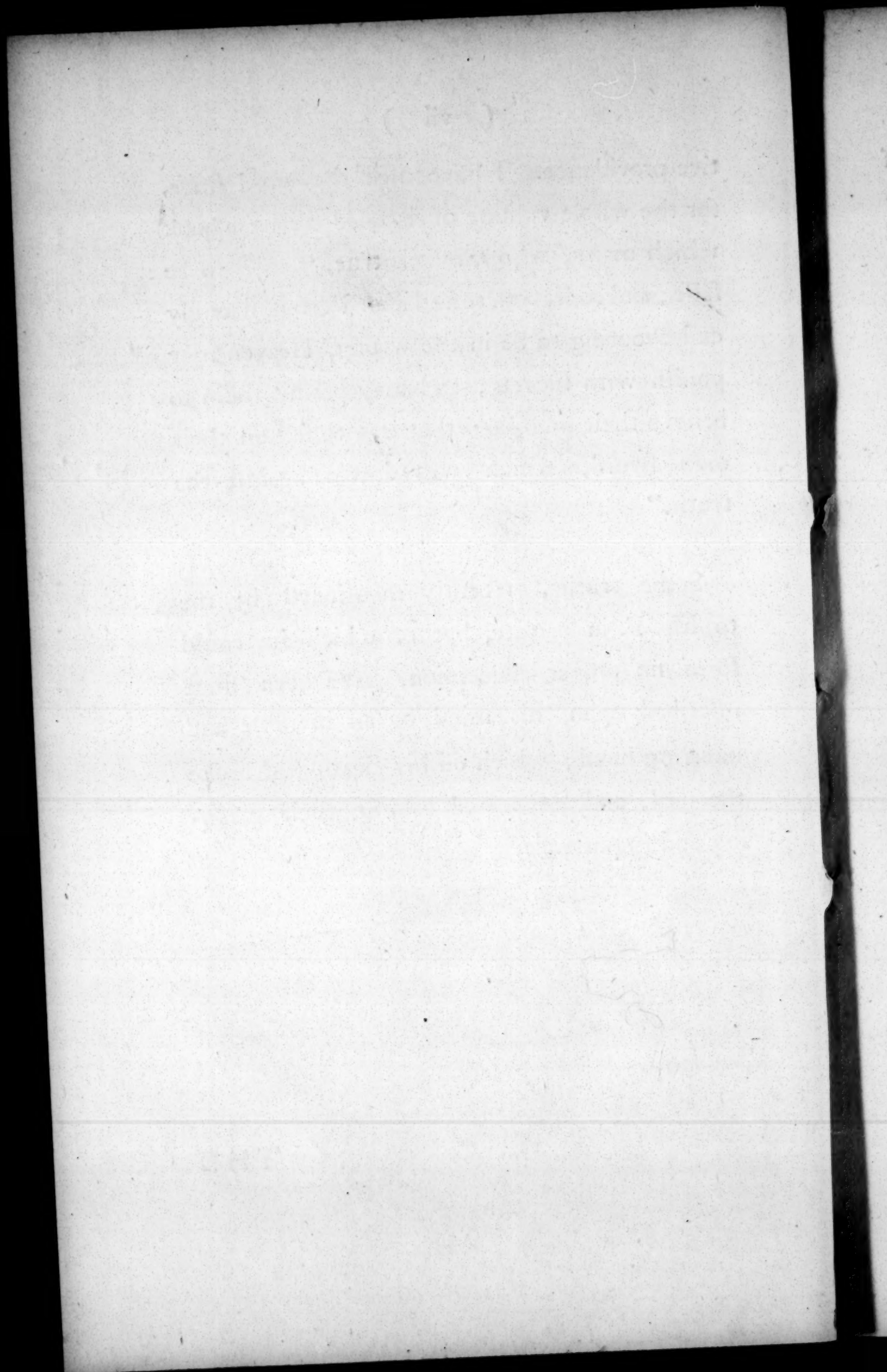
I am ready to answer every proper inquiry respecting what I have written of Mr. F. and to *prove* what I have asserted.

Let

Let no one be surprised, if some, from misinformation, and others, from their enmity to religion, should represent all that Mr. F. said in his last illness, to be the effect of *madness*. If he said nothing about his soul before his mind was disordered, then his *last testament* became void, and his *repentance* impossible. Can a *madman* repent of his sins? To assert that he was not concerned about his soul whilst in the exercise of his reason, is saying that he died without repentance, and, of consequence, that he *is gone to hell*. To such inconsiderate lengths have some even of his *friends* proceeded, that sooner than confess the truth, *they* have insinuated such things as strongly imply that he died under the power of sin. I do not know any man in the neighbourhood, destitute of religion, for whom I had a greater respect; and I hope, no one will think I was stimulated by any other motive to this publication, than a love of my Bible—a sense of duty to its Author—and a desire of contributing to the improvement of this instructive

tive providence. I have used the word *Bible*, for the whole volume of revealed truth : a book which many, who *fear* it is true, “ *wish* to be false ; and endeavour to find it so. Persons strongly endeavouring to be in the wrong, Heaven may punish with success ; and may permit them to believe their own lie ; that is,—to fall on their own sword, which was drawn against the truth.”

Some truths, recently mentioned by me to Mr. F. in private, but of which he could form no proper conception, have been since inscribed upon his mind by an invisible and unerring hand ; which on his death-bed broke the seal, and discovered to him their meaning and importance.



THE
CONFESSION OF A DEIST.

His Age, Character, and Sentiments.

MR. F. the subject of this pamphlet, died about thirty-three years of age. He possessed an intelligent mind, a good natural temper, and discovered to all a behaviour open, manly, and engaging. In his profession he was generally and deservedly esteemed. As a man of the world, he loved its pleasures, and pursued them as far as his business would permit; but the card-table was his favourite amusement. He would frequently say to me, "I am prodigiously fond of cards." As to religion, he was a *Deist*; that is, he professed to believe, that his *Reason*, unassisted by the Bible, or any revelation from God, was sufficient to direct him in the path of duty and happiness.

It was his opinion that the soul was material—differently organized from the body, and subject to decay and to dissolution. Being the apothecary to my family, he would often, in his visits, converse with me upon religious subjects. He seldom came when I was at home, but I took the opportunity of addressing him con-

cerning the fallen state of his soul, and of his need of pardon and salvation. He always heard me patiently, and brought forward his objections against the Bible with great coolness of temper, and unreserved freedom. Though I have sometimes addressed him for an hour or two at a time, in the closest manner I was capable, I never once saw his temper ruffled. It is true, in the presence of some persons, he could throw out an unfair reflection against religion and its friends; but in *my* presence he never laughed at any part of the sacred scriptures, the history of Jonah excepted. "And do you," said he, "really believe, that the whale swallowed Jonah, and that he was preserved, and brought forth again upon the dry land?"—I answered, "Whether it was a whale, I know not, although the word is used in the New Testament; but the passage in the book of Jonah reads, 'Now the *Lord* had prepared a GREAT FISH,' without specifying its particular kind. Is there no fish in the mighty waters capable of swallowing a man? But if not, could not that God to whom 'all things are possible,' the author of this Creation, *prepare* one for this purpose? for the words are, '*God prepared* a great fish.' Considering the *importance* of a revelation from God to man, and that miracles are designed as a confirmation of it, is there any thing in this miracle unworthy of the wisdom, the justice, the power, or the kindness of God?"—After a short pause, he replied, "Well! *you* are happy in the belief of the Bible, and *I* am easy without it. I have no fears about my soul, for I believe it will die with my body; I am never disturbed about these things."

things." To this I rejoined, "Ah! dear sir, that is a mere bravado. In the smiling hour of health and prosperity, you may appear to have conquered your fears; but in the trying hour of sickness and death, your fears will conquer you!" After a long pause, which was not uncommon to him, he arose and wished me a good day.

Mr. F. would now and then say, "I can read what is called profane history, with as much pleasure as another reads his Bible." But there is nothing wonderful in this. The authors of profane history, too frequently, are partial. They have their favourites to flatter, and their favourite sins to palliate; and they often commend, as virtues, what the Bible condemns as crimes. But the impartial book of God, instead of making light of sin, every where describes it, in its own odious nature, and tremendous consequences. Profane history addresses our reason and passions; but the inspired writers "commend themselves to every man's CONSCIENCE, as in the SIGHT of God!"—Profane history proposes motives of action taken from interest, reputation, false honour, and pleasure; the divine writers speak with the authority of Him, who is "a just God and a Saviour;" and address us by motives drawn from his love on the one hand, and his justice on the other; from a future judgment, from the happiness of heaven, and the pains of hell. Profane history records actions, and mistakes their *motives*; but "the word of God," through the influence of the divine Spirit, discovers the most hidden "thoughts and intentions of the heart." Who then

can wonder, that a man of pleasure, the slave of sin, should prefer the book, which records the crimes of *others*, before one which condemns him for his *own* open and "secret faults?" Mr. F. thought, as many do, "that *sincerity* renders any religion acceptable to God;" a sentiment replete with absurdities. Strange! that a deluded pagan, burning alive his first-born as an offering to God, should be accepted in his savage barbarity, by a Being of infinite *goodness* and *justice*. Yet this deluded heathen, "thinks he does God service," as did Paul, before his conversion, in persecuting the followers of Christ. He said, "I verily thought with myself, that I OUGHT to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth." So far he was *sincere*, but *deceived*; and after his conversion from such sincerity and self-deception, he says, "I did it *ignorantly* and in unbelief." What he boasted of, previous to his conversion, as sincere and blameless, he afterwards acknowledged to be his *sin*, *repented* of it, and "obtained mercy."

*His Sickness, Distress of Mind, and
Confession.*

MR. F. while visiting a patient at some distance from home, complained that he felt himself chilled. His friend gave him some warm wine, and he quickly returned. The medicine he soon after took had not the desired effect. An eminent physician attended him; but—sooner or later, “the gift of healing must fail!” After some variations in his disorder, he was apprehensive that death was approaching. This through divine influence produced in his mind a train of solemn reflections. He saw, he felt, he owned his situation. He was afraid he should *die*—he dreaded the *consequences* of death—his mind was filled with the greatest anguish. His anxious and sympathizing relatives and friends endeavoured to console his mind, by what *they* thought enlivening conversation. They exhorted him not to give way to despondency, and attempted to cheer him with hopes of recovery, but all in vain. One told him, “You have led a good life;” another said, “You have been a good liver;” the clergyman assured him “he had no reason to be afraid;” but “miserable comforters were they all.” His convinced and troubled conscience “refused to be comforted,” by any such paltry considerations. His immortal soul, his sinful and long-neglected soul, now occupied all his thoughts;

and, among other things, he acknowledged, with unutterable distress, his neglect of the *Lord's-day*, and the public worship of God. One of his friends made an apology for his neglect of the sabbath, but he not admitting the excuse, condemned himself for employing the opportunities he might have enjoyed to other purposes.

To one he said, "Mr. C. once told me that he would rather have a millstone chained to his neck, and be cast into the midst of the sea, than be overtaken by affliction and death, with *my* sentiments and dispositions;" and immediately added, "well he might say so!" I well remember, when he attended one of my dear little daughters in dying circumstances, to have addressed him in the above words; but I never mentioned it even to my wife; I am therefore very *certain* he uttered that expression. He wished those about him to take warning, and not to neglect God and their souls as he had done. A person to whom he was dear told me, that he never in his life saw a mind worked up to such a pitch of distress, nor a conscience so oppressed with guilt; and that he declared if he recovered, he would expose his ignorance and misery to the world.

Mr. F. had a general acquaintance with men and things; but he knew not clearly the "one thing needful." He was totally ignorant how his lost soul could be saved, consistent with the *justice* of God. At another time he said, "I have conversed with Mr. C. about religion, without appearing to *believe* any thing he said; but if I am restored, I will own the truth to him, and I ought to do it upon my knees."

Should the reader ask, what prevented him from acknowledging the convictions he felt? let his declaration on his dying bed answer, "My pride, and the fear of being called a methodist, would not permit me to own what I did believe." But however formidable the word *Methodist* appeared to him, when amongst his worldly companions, it had no weight on his mind in the near views of eternity; nor did he *then* doubt who was in the right; for he told those about him, that Mr. C. was so, and if he recovered, he would go to him, and attend upon his ministry."

His Despair, Derangement, and Death.

THE best and the worst of men have been the subjects of mental derangement. It is occasioned sometimes by the force of disease; in other instances, by the violence of disease and the horrors of a guilty conscience united; and, not unfrequently, by the combined influence of disease, guilt, and temptation.

*While guilt disturb'd and broke his peace,
Nor flesh, nor soul, had rest or ease.*

A strong and vivid apprehension of the divine Majesty and glory; of his purity and power, his truth and justice, displayed in his vast creation, in the operations of his providence, and the commands and threatenings of his holy law, are well calculated to destroy a sinner's self-righteous hopes, and to excite within him the most alarming fears. Bodily disorder may produce, or be occasioned by, the most fearful agitations of mind, such as God threatened to the rebellious Israelites; "I will even appoint over you *terror*, consumption, and the burning ague." When the spirit of this threatening is felt by any one, either in the soul or body, who can wonder at his bitterly exclaiming, "The ARROWS of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the TERRORS of God do set themselves

themselves in array against me !” In such a situation, the man withdraws from the busy scenes and enjoyments of life. His views are wholly confined to his deplorable state, and the horrors of his mind are enlarged beyond conception, by reflections on what he *has* been—what he *is*—and what he fears he *shall* be ! Such was the awful condition of Mr. F. He reviewed the *past*—his past days and past advantages, as gone, and gone for ever. His sins were now recollected, and the guilt of them pressed him down. The warnings he had received were brought to his remembrance, whilst his conscience, the dictates of which he had too frequently slighted, stared him in the face, and filled him with inconceivable anguish.

He felt his *present* situation. Struck with a mortal disease—oppressed with a load of guilt—despairing of relief from any around him—without hope of mercy from his offended and righteous Judge, he trembled in every nerve, in expectation of, what is of all other things the most fearful, “ falling into the hands of the LIVING GOD.”

The idea of what would be his *future* condition oppressed his heart. He believed he should die—certainly die—shortly die. He was overwhelmed with the painful, painful thought (a thought not familiar to his mind), of leaving his worldly *all* ! He heard himself called, however reluctant—however prepared or unprepared, to bid an agonizing farewell to his business and property ; to his friends and relations ; to his body and the world ! “ His confidence was now to be rooted out of his tabernacle, and to bring him to

THE KING OF TERRORS!" To a man in such a situation, how can death in its nature, its harbingers, and its consequences, be otherwise than unspeakably tremendous! If SATAN be permitted in those awful moments to hurl his "fiery darts," he must feel emphatically the import of those expressive words in the history of Saul; "AN EVIL SPIRIT from the Lord TERRIFIED him." No wonder if that malignant spirit who once taught the deluded mortal to laugh at the name of a devil, as if he had no existence—to suppose that life was a long term—that sin was a harmless thing—that God was all mercy—that he should fare as well as others—that he might repent and say, *Lord have mercy upon me*, in his last moments; no wonder if that foul fiend should cruelly triumph over the soul he has so deceived, and present to the mind every object calculated to produce despair. Such combined causes may, and, it is not improbable, often do, produce insanity. Even a good man once exclaimed, "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." If it be possible for a saint of the first rank to be oppressed with a distracting sense of the terrors of God, need we wonder that a bad man should be tortured in a higher degree?

Poor Mr. F. apprehending himself to be on the brink of the grave, and the verge of hell (this was really his sorrowful case), was thrown into such unutterable agony, as to be bereft of his reason. He was deranged for several days; and when favoured with short lucid intervals, (in which he knew and conversed with those about him), the thoughts, "I shall die and be banished into hell," soon again overwhelmed his spirit,

spirit, and left him a miserable prey to distraction. "A dread of FUTURITY," said his ****, "drove him mad."

*If God shuts up in sad despair,
Who can remove the heavy bar?*

Every time he was favoured with a return of reason, he discovered a painful sense of the evil of sin;—he felt the guilt arising from the neglect of God and his word;—he mourned over his lost opportunities of seeking the knowledge and enjoyment of the best things. He declared his full purpose, if restored, of attending to the great concerns of his soul; and of associating with the people who meet in the dissenting place of worship at Maidenhead, where he was now convinced, "the truth, as it is in Jesus," is published. He solemnly warned his companions not to follow his example, and poured out his soul in fervent prayer to that God, whose mercy, when in health, he had never seriously implored. He felt, it is true, no small difficulty in praying, as all necessarily must, who are wholly strangers to that exercise, till they are laid upon a dying bed. He frankly acknowledged, and most bitterly lamented, that he had lived contrary to the truth which he had heard from me, and repugnant to the convictions of his own mind. To one, on a certain occasion, he mentioned the sufferings of Christ. "I suffer much (said he), and I deserve it, and much more; but what are *my* sufferings compared with the sufferings of Christ for sinners?" The sufferings of Christ, if I am not mistaken, were the last subject

subject on which we ever conversed, in my house. He had lain for some time senseless—"Heard you that groan?—It was his last."

His repentance, I hope, was "a repentance unto salvation," and the Lord Jesus I trust received his spirit. His illness and departure were unexpected, awful, and pregnant with instruction. They speak to ~~us~~—they speak to *you*, Reader, with great energy, in the language of our Saviour, "Be you also ready; for in such an hour as you think not, THE SON OF MAN cometh!"

REFLECTIONS.

Beware of idolizing your REASON. Mr. F. of whom we have been writing, attended to his reason, in *opposition* to God's infallible word. Reason, detached from Revelation, is but a diseased, weak, and dim eye; destitute of light. The reasoning powers of man, in consequence of his apostasy, are depraved, enervated, obscured. Man is absolutely incapacitated to know and return to God as his friend and portion, without the Bible. Yea, he is unable to return, even in the enjoyment of it, unless "the Spirit of knowledge and of power" illuminate and strengthen his dark and feeble mind. Mr. F. once took occasion to tell me that "without the Bible, or any Revelation, his *reason* could discern that God was *good*—that this appeared in the works of nature and providence." I answered, "Yes, my dear Sir, God is good; and the heavens, the earth, and sea, proclaim his goodness; but is it not wonderful, beyond compare, think you, that this good God, who has consulted the well-being of all his creatures, in ten thousand instances, and particularly of his creature man, should have left him destitute of any certain rule or guide to his judgment and actions?—left him to grope in awful darkness and painful uncertainty! Surely, your sentiment is a reflection on that *goodness* of God, of which you entertain

tain such honourable ideas. For if the Bible be not true—if we have no revelation—then this good God, with all his attention to the bodies of men, and even to the irrational creation, has abandoned their *minds* to a dreadful uncertainty respecting their *duty* and *happiness*, in life and death.

Are you not convinced of having sinned against the dictates of your conscience, in numerous instances? and do not you observe, that fallen man, in the different stages of his life, is the subject of a variety of diseases, of torturing pains, and of terrible deaths? Have you never known a man cut off by sudden death, just when he had attained to the summit of his worldly hopes? and from such striking events, have you not as much reason to dread the divine JUSTICE, as to hope in the divine goodness? If your reason at one time says, God will be *merciful* to me, as a *good* God, does she not suggest at another season, he will punish me as a *righteous* God? You cannot possibly be certain that He will *not* punish you. Reason, undirected by “the word of God,” will say, he *may*—he *may* punish my sins hereafter;—I am not, I cannot be *sure* that he will not. It is *possible*,—and, considering the appearances of the divine displeasure in *this* world, it is *probable*, that God will punish sin in a *future* world. Supposing there be no revelation of God’s mercy and will to man, where can you find *one certain evidence* that he will forgive; or *one instance* of a sinner that he has forgiven? Look into *the book of nature*: can you read in the heavens, the earth, or the seas, that God will pardon sin? Can you read in the sun, the moon,
and

and stars, a sentence of this import, "There is FORGIVENESS with thee?" No—not a word;—not a syllable of pardoning mercy, is to be found in all the works of nature. The works of nature exhibit, it is true, the glory of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness; but *no mercy is there* revealed to *sinners*. Look into *the book of Providence*: there, "Behold the goodness and severity of God!" Behold his awful, awful judgments on individuals, families, towns, cities, and nations. Can you reasonably conclude from your worldly *prosperity*, that you shall meet with favour from God? The *vilest characters on earth* are living in ease, health, wealth, and pleasure;—and will your reason say that *they* are approved by a holy God? Will she not rather infer that, as they abuse his goodness and long-suffering, and yet are not punished in the present world, they will meet the righteous reward of their sins in that which is to come? But where—where in all the vast of nature, if for a moment you forget the Bible, can you find *one demonstration*, that God will, on any terms whatsoever, forgive sin?—All—all is darkness and uncertainty. Hence arise the *necessity* and *value* of the Bible, that "LAMP to our feet—that LIGHT to our paths."

Mr. F. could declaim very freely, at seasons, on the all-sufficiency of reason. But what, I would ask, did reason, of herself, perform for the salvation of his soul? What *sin* did his reason ever conquer? What spiritual *duty* did his reason ever discharge? Did she bring him to God as his rest and everlasting all?—No; she left him a prey to the love of this world—to seek
his

his happiness in it, and a broad mark to every surrounding temptation. She left him preferring the society of worldly minded men, to the company of those who truly feared God—she left him preferring a novel or a play, to his Bible; a card-table to the pure and exalted pleasures of true religion—and a pleasant ride on the Lord's-day, to the public worship of his Maker! What did reason, unassisted by revelation, effect for him in “the time of need;” under great sufferings, and in the article of death? In spite of all her boasted power, he *sunk*—he sunk down under a load of guilt, under the terrors of expiring nature, and the dread of an eternal world! He could utter, we acknowledge, many fine things about the *goodness* of God, and the *mercy* of God, while in health and prosperity; but when all his worldly hopes vanished and disappeared, what *then* could reason do?—She proved of no greater importance than “a broken reed.” Had his mind been enriched with a scriptural knowledge of God, had it been fortified, by an unshaken confidence in him, as “gracious and merciful, as faithful and just to forgive him his sins,” through the atonement of Jesus, the mountain of his guilt, though it lay heavy upon him, would not have crushed his hopes; but he would have risen superior to all his fears, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.

Reader—Take warning by the instance before you; and shun, as you would a fiery-flying serpent, that pride of understanding, which scorns to be beholden to the light of revelation. How important in this connection, is the advice of Solomon, “Trust in the Lord,”

Lord," (as revealed in the Bible) "with all thy heart: and lean not to thy own understanding:" For,

*Where Reason fails, with all her powers ;
There Faith prevails and love adores.*

Let the preceding short narrative be so improved, as to *recommend the BIBLE* more to your attention, esteem, and love. Too many reject it, without examining its contents, or the evidences of its divine original. This conduct is as absurd as it is hazardous. What man can rationally expect to become an astronomer or a physician, without study or practice? A knowledge of the great doctrines of Christianity is not to be acquired but by attention and labour. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of its doctrines, whether they be of God." How trifling and foolish is it to suppose, that by an idle wish, or a cursory reading, we can attain to a comprehensive understanding of the book of God—a book which contains the thoughts of an INFINITE MIND!

There are some who *wish* to disbelieve the truths contained in the scriptures, though at the same time they *fear* they are indubitably true. Before you venture to despise, or even to slight the Bible, let me advise you to be sure, *quite* sure, that its contents are false, unworthy of God, and of your regard. If you *doubt* whether you are right—if you think the Bible *may* be true; if you cannot demonstrate that it is not a gracious revelation from heaven, what a tremendous risque are you running! Think, Reader!—and think

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again:

again: if—*if* this book we call the Bible, should be found, at last, to be true—infallibly true, and you neglect it, and live in opposition to its doctrines, precepts, and promises, you are left, in a season of affliction, and in the hour of death, without remedy—left to feel the insupportable weight of those THREATENINGS which it denounces against its enemies.

Infidel, you may now laugh at the Christian's attachment to his Bible; but you must, and you certainly will, in moments of sober, serious reflection, believe him to be on the *safe* side. His following the dictates of revelation, cannot injure either his character or his intellect, his health or his peace, his prosperity here, or his felicity hereafter. The Christian *must* be right. We are not ashamed, nor afraid to declare, that he cannot, in the nature of things, be otherwise. Some complain they have *no time* to read their Bibles. Have you time to read a newspaper, a novel, a piece of history, or a play?—Have you time to squander at a public-house, in cards, noise, and nonsense? Where the gratifications of sense, the interests and pleasures of this world, are the objects, you have time in abundance; but alas! no leisure for God—his word—your immortal souls!—No time to think of death, judgment, and eternity, although you must quickly be made acquainted with your concern in each of them! Is this *your* case, Reader? and do you purpose to pay attention to the word of God, and your salvation at some *future* day? Remember Mr. F. is no more! he has left behind him all he held dear in this world; left them
though

though he was young; left them years, many years sooner than he expected; and will *you* presume on some future, uncertain hour? “Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” To-morrow, your body may be a corpse, and your soul—where? Horrible idea! Beyond the reach of mercy! Look at poor Mr. F. What consequences followed *his* neglect of the word and will of God? He lived in uncertainty respecting his future state, and embraced the most *pernicious errors*. In sickness he was plunged into gloomy despondency; and like a ship in a storm, without anchor or pilot, rudder or compass, he was “tossed to and fro, and not comforted,” till sinking into the quicksands of despair, he made shipwreck of hope and of his reason.

Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies!

He that hates truth, shall be the dupe of lies.

Beware of *those books* which corrupt the judgment; enslave, pollute, and sensualize the soul—those wicked books which tend to extenuate the evil of sin, the excellency of religion, and the value of the Bible. Beware of *companions* who are inimical to the scriptures, to their spirit and design; and who make no other use of the Bible than to quote, now and then, a verse or two in order to create a jest and raise a laugh. Remember, that none but “Fools make a mock at sin;”—“Woe unto those who laugh now; for they shall

weep and mourn!" Do not stumble at the conduct of *worldly minded* clergymen. Decide not upon the Bible by their inconsistent conduct, but judge them according to its sacred declarations. Mr. F. has confessed to me, that those clergymen (some of whom he named), who, after entering a pulpit, and coldly reading about ten or fifteen minutes a sermon procured of some bookseller, had no objection to join in the dissipations of the day, in drinking, in attending on plays, and juvenile sports, he was *sure*, could not *believe* their Bible; "and how then," said he, "can a man of reflection hear them?" I asked him his opinion of Mr. *** the clergymen, who seemed most in his element when he was hunting, at the race-ground, or the card-table; and was sometimes completely intoxicated? He replied, "I heard him once; but I'll not hear him again." The conduct of such wretches, has made hundreds of infidels. I told him I had my fears, that their behaviour had unhappily tended to strengthen his prejudices against the Bible. He acknowledged it had; and added, that it was no more than might be reasonably expected. What an insult to reason, to common sense, to decency, to every thing rational and sacred, are such characters! When we see an effeminate fop, at one time skipping about to every place of carnal amusement; indulging his pride, his appetites, and passions; when we behold him at another time, with his surplice and band, with his gown and book, assuming an air of sanctity and importance, in teaching others, and calling himself a minister of the *pure* and

self-denying Jesus ; who, that exercises his understanding, can help being shocked at such a solemn farce !

*Unthinking wretch ! how could'st thou hope to please
A God, a Spirit, with such toys as these ?
Whilst with his grace and statutes on thy tongue,
Thou lovest sin, and dost thy bearers wrong.*

“ The fiery trial,” of sickness and death, burned up the “ wood, hay, and stubble,” of levity, error, false hope, and delusive reasonings, in which Mr. F. had prided himself. What, *then*, did he think of the Bible, of Christ, and salvation ; of the people of God, and his own soul, the past neglect of which occasioned him to say, “ It had been better for him, if a millstone had been chained to his neck, and he thrown into the sea,” than to be overtaken in his circumstances by sickness and death ?

Can those who reject the Bible, as a divine revelation, produce any thing better, or equally calculated to afford relief to a guilty, self-condemned sinner ? See ! in this dying gentleman, what all our boasted reason, unaided by the sacred oracles, is capable of doing, to ease a tormented conscience, and disperse the gloom arising from the view of death and judgment ! All, to him, was dark, doubtful, insupportable ! The foundation upon which he had built his hope was unable to sustain the mighty superstructure, when death approached. Observe, Christian Reader, those who sneer at your attachment to the book of God, at such

a crisis, will greatly need the consolations it affords, and often sink and despair for the want of them. "O blessed revelation! that opens such wonders! O dreadful revelation! if it opens them in vain."

Endeavour, with great attention, to *distinguish between names and things*. Under the distress experienced by Mr. F. he was told, that "he had been a good liver—that he had led a good life." These are common expressions in the mouths of those who are ignorant of their own hearts, of the law of God, and the salvation of Christ. "A good liver," he was called. Was this assertion *true*? Let us appeal to his *life*, to the *Bible*, and to his *dying language*. He lived in an habitual neglect of the worship of God—of the divine commands—of the Lord's-day, and of every thing that appertained to his soul's salvation: was *this* good living? Some thousands of the hours of his short life, did he devote to the unmanly, irrational, useless, and pernicious practice of card-playing. If more time was spent at the card-table than in his closet, or in the house of God; was *this* good living? Perhaps, Reader, you are a person of a similar description, "deceiving and being deceived." Pitiable infatuation! What an affront to reason and common sense! to be a vassal to "divers lusts and pleasures," and yet dream that this is religion—"good living!"

Let us appeal to the Bible. Well-being is antecedent to well-doing. A man must be *made* a Christian, before he can *act* the Christian. He "must be born again—become a new creature"—believe in Christ

Christ to the saving of his soul—acknowledge him as his Lord, depend on him for pardon, righteousness, and strength, and imitate his example. These are essentially necessary to constitute him a man of God, and an heir of glory. But never did Mr. F. attempt—no, not even *attempt*, to obey the Redeemer's will, or wish to be directed by his word and Spirit; and yet, some who professed the Christian name, denominated his conduct, "good living."

We appeal to *his own behaviour*; not in the bloom of health, with a circle of companions around him, as ignorant as himself; but on the bed of death. In those awful hours he felt no temptation to deceive. He was going to appear before the Searcher of hearts. Did he *then* acknowledge that he had lived well? No, no! he felt the criminality of having been so long deaf to the voice of conscience—of living to himself, and not to God. "A good liver!" No, he then felt himself *a most flagrant sinner*—a sinner for ever undone, if destitute of his salvation, "who came to seek and to save them that are lost." He was a man of a pleasing deportment, but politeness is not godliness.

A Deist, yea, an Atheist, may have an amiable natural temper, refined and polished manners, be obliging to his relations, and with great punctuality discharge his debts. He may be a *moral* man, but he cannot be a *godly* man. If a man possesses a small share, of what is called *morality*, or regards a few duties, which particularly respect his neighbour, though habitually forgetful of God, and regardless of his glory; he is

considered by the multitude as “a good liver :” but Mr. F’s life had been of such a nature, that under the influence of an awakened conscience he was driven to despair. “Wo unto them who call evil good, and good evil;” who represent the formal professor, or the varnished hypocrite, as a good man; and one who really fears God, and is consecrated to his honour, as a knave or a fool. Wo unto them who wish to consider sin as a pardonable weakness, which a merciful God pities, rather than a crime, which his justice will revenge, notwithstanding he has assured them, by the threatenings of his word, the sufferings of the damned, and the agonies of his SON, that “the wages of sin is death”—everlasting death. To sooth the fears of a dying man with the vain conceit that he has “lived well,” and is in a safe condition, though he has been uniformly an enemy to God, and to all righteousness, is *cruel*, beyond the power of language to express, as it tends to flatter him with a false opinion of his character, and to throw a bar in the way of his repentance. Is it probable, that telling any one he has little to repent of, will produce repentance?

Such is the deep-rooted aversion of every *unrenewed* heart to sacred things, that if a man in *health* converses seriously about the concerns of his soul, he is immediately denominated an *enthusiast*; and if in the season of *sickness* he reproaches himself for preferring earth to heaven, or feels anxious to enjoy the forgiveness of his sins, and an experimental evidence that “God is the strength of his heart,” and will be “his portion for ever;”

ever," in the opinion of the generality he is certainly *deranged*! This is easily accounted for. The man who is not a friend to *real godliness*, will always misrepresent, and then oppose it. He may be ashamed to profess himself an enemy to *Religion*, and therefore brands it with a name of reproach; and to justify his opposition to it, calls it canting, hypocrisy, weakness, enthusiasm, methodism, or madness. Many in this manner palliate their neglect of the gospel of Christ, and the contempt they cast upon its advocates; and treat the disciples of Jesus as the greatest enemies to God in the world. Persons of this description will not dislike you for being unchaste, intemperate, or profane. They can readily pardon your adultery and fornication; they can forgive your drunkenness and swearing; your sabbath-breaking, and impure conversation; but if you profess to believe in Christ, as your only SAVIOUR; to obey him, as your Almighty Sovereign; and to imitate him, as your illustrious PATTERN, in his spirit, conversation, and actions, they cannot forgive you. If you can, under the name of a Christian, go to church or meeting on a Sunday, and live through the rest of the week in the fashionable follies of the day, if you can attend their feasts, and join in their unmeaning or wanton songs, if you can get drunk, talk nonsense, and swear, then—then they may call you "a good man! a worthy man! a good sort of a man! yea, a good sort of a kind of a man," as some have expressed it. Nay, they will obliterate all the above sins, even in a *parish priest*, who preaches to them

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“smooth things,” because such a preacher, to extenuate his own sins, must extenuate the sins of his hearers. The reason why those who are Christians in *name* and *form* only, attend the instructions of such a despicable being, is this, he is very *kind* and *tender* to their *sins*. He says nothing in the pulpit to disturb the *conscience*, affront the *pride*, or interrupt the *false peace*, of any in his congregation. He obliges them with a scrap of *morality* in lieu of “the gospel of Christ;” unites with them in *praising* morality, as the best apology for not *practising* it; pretends to recommend *good* works, but says little or nothing against *bad* ones; never burdens their memory with warnings against the most dangerous sins, or exhortations to important duties; but lulls himself and his hearers into a sound sleep, with the soft and smoothly-sounding terms of *vice* and *virtue*. Instead of unfolding the nature and design of the DIVINE LAW, instead of shewing to sinners their guilt and wretchedness, their helpless and hopeless condition, instead of recommending the great REDEEMER, in his person and righteousness, grace and salvation, the dull repetition of vice and virtue, virtue and vice, is all they hear, one sabbath after another; and with the same effect, as if it was the sound of the church-bell. Let reason decide, therefore, if *these* are not the fools and madmen, who, while they call themselves Christians, indulge their sinful appetites, and applaud the preacher; who, instead of being faithful to their consciences, fosters their pride, confirms them in their sinful propensities, and cries, “Peace, peace,” until “sudden destruction

struction comes upon them !" On the contrary, if you love your Bibles, fear an oath, spend the Lord's-day in public, domestic, and private devotion, and if your social religious intercourses are sweetened by a " conversation becoming the gospel," prepare to meet the enmity of the men of the world, whatever pretences they make to religion ; for these things are with them unpardonable sins !

If a worldly-minded clergyman hear his parishioners swearing, or taking the Lord's name in vain, especially if they mingle with it a little vulgar wit, *he* swears with them, or sanctions their profanity by a hearty laugh. Were he to rebuke them, though ever so meekly, he would instantly be liable to the charge of *methodism*, preciseness, and singularity ; charges which, it is probable, would more disturb him, than the accusation of being unchaste, or unfaithful, proud, or overbearing. Such a man may cry out against Mr. F. in the language of one, very recently, to *me*, " To be sure, it was very bad of him not to believe the Bible." " True, sir," said I, " it was bad indeed ; but you and your companions are fifty degrees more criminal than he, in professing to believe the Bible to be *true*, and living as though you were sure it is *false*." Such persons may proudly say to themselves, " We thank God we are not Deists ; we believe our Bible, and attend our church or meeting." But alas ! they only *read*, or say their prayers, or hear *another* discharge the duty. There are no prayers, either in the established church, or in any dissenting place of worship, which

which are suitable to *their desires*. A sensible writer has well expressed their wishes in the following words; "Give me, O God! my heaven on earth. Let my lusts have a long and prosperous reign over me; and let not religion approach to hurt me. Lead me into temptation, and give me strength to comply with it." The person whose heart is pregnant with such desires, may appear shocked at this representation, and exclaim, "Horrid wretch!" while conscience whispers, "Thou art the man!"

Reader, if your heart be under the power of carnal gratifications, if your worldly business occupy the whole of your time, and draw your heart from God, or if some fashionable opinions, like an opiate, stupify your conscience, I would beg leave to suggest, that before many days are elapsed, for ought you know to the contrary, while paying a visit, taking a pleasant walk or ride, or engaged like Mr. F. in your secular calling, a mortal disease may *as unexpectedly* seize your body, send you home to your bed, never more to be removed, but to your "long home." Then, starting from the dreams of those pleasurable hours, in which you *wished* to disbelieve a *future* state of misery, you may be surprised to find your faith in its existence strengthened, by a *present* hell of self-reproach, despair, and dread *within* you! A man of the world, and a Christian, are characters essentially different from each other. Let Christ's words to his disciples determine this point. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen

chosen you out of the world, THEREFORE the world hateth you." Here, Reader, take your choice; you *must* follow the world, or Christ: if you follow Christ, the world will hate you; if you follow the world, Christ will disown you. I am not insensible of the fascinating power of "the pleasures of sin," and I know that nothing can subdue it but the grace of the gospel. Those who ridicule the doctrine of divine influences, prove in the same moment the *necessity* of them. The indispensable necessity of the "Spirit of grace," to renew, purify, and strengthen the mind against the prevalence of temptation, may receive some small illustration from the following anecdote.

In the town of ——— there lived two young gentlemen, *Infidelis* and *Impiatus*. They frequently enjoyed each others company, and spent a large portion of that time in carnal amusements, which should have been divided between the studies of their *profession*, and the concerns of their souls. As they were both "men of the world, and sought their portion in this life," they promised themselves many future opportunities of "serving divers lusts and pleasures." They had made an appointment to enjoy the approaching races; but, as the apostle James speaks, "we know not what shall be on the morrow." *Infidelis* was unexpectedly taken ill, and such were his convictions, his fears, and his ignorance of the grace and salvation of Christ, that he despaired of mercy, and lost the use of his reason; but before he was deprived of his senses, he talked very seriously about his *soul*, his *sins*, and
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of what was likely to be his *future* condition. This was propagated to a considerable distance.

Impiatus, who visited him during his indisposition, was extremely agitated, to witness in his favourite companion distress and consternation at the approach of death, especially as it forced him to reflect on his *own* situation. Accustomed to disregard the remonstrances of conscience, and wishing to drown his present *fears*, he used considerable diligence to persuade his friends, that all *Infidelis* uttered, in this season of his affliction, was the effusion of madness. It was the practice of *Impiatus* in his common conversation, to take the Lord's name in vain, although that Bible, which he professed to believe, most solemnly declares, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." "For God's sake!" he exclaimed, "do not suffer a report to go abroad that *Infidelis* talked so in his sickness, for if you do, he will never more be able to hold up his head, should he recover." A sentiment this, which supposes religion to be unworthy of the notice of a sensible man.

Infidelis, however, soon died, after suffering great anguish of mind, on account of his having lived "without God in the world;" and it was observed, both by serious and profane persons, that *Impiatus*, after all his attempts to conceal the terrifying apprehensions of his departed friend, and the forebodings of his own mind, was scarcely himself for some days afterwards; and if he felt a kind of chill, was ready to turn pale with the dread of a fever, and its possible consequences;

consequences; nor should I wonder to hear, that he has been actually overtaken by the disease he feared; for in more senses than one, the following words will be found true, "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him." *Impiatus*, by the influence of worldly company, by self-delusion, and a bold opposition to truth, to providence, and to conscience, soon smothered his convictions, and assumed an air of unusual gaiety in his countenance and behaviour.

Thus, Reader, you may observe, that no warnings, however faithful; no convictions, however pungent; no power short of the energy of almighty grace, can separate the heart from the love of its darling sins. "If any man have not THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, he is none of his."

Query.—Is it probable that *Impiatus* will be able to hold up his head at the judgment-seat, if penitent *Infidelis* should there meet him, and produce a stifled conscience, and truth obstinately opposed, as witnesses against him? Beware, then, Reader, of confounding names with things. Faith in the atonement and grace of the Redeemer will produce "good living;" that is, a life of communion with God, and devotedness to him. Without this faith, there can be no good living in the present world, nor any *good hope* of happiness in a future world. "Be not deceived"—reading the creed of the established church is not the faith of the gospel; nor is that *profession* of faith which many make, who call themselves dissenters, inseparably connected with the salvation of the soul. Think not that *morality* is godliness; for a man may be decent in his conduct,
who

who neither loves God, believes in Christ; nor repents of his sins.

Do not imagine that any person can be a *real Christian*, unless he *believes* in Jesus, *delights* in him, expects his happiness from him, and yields a cheerful obedience to his will. Depend not on the efficacy of any particular dispensation, to bring your soul to God. Remember that *Impiatus* was *hardened* in his infidelity by the sufferings and death of poor *Infidelis*; and that many rise from "the bed of languishing," to break their vows, and persevere in their iniquities. Confide not in your *resolutions*, how solemn soever they may have been. They have deceived you in time past, and may deceive you again. Resolutions made in your *own strength*, only prove the *pride* and *ignorance* of your heart; and God may justly leave you, after all, to convince you of your *weakness*, and your need of that *grace*, which, perhaps, you have too frequently undervalued.

Do you resolve to repent at some *future* season? You are indisposed then to repent at *present*; and what better is that conduct than acknowledging your hypocrisy and love of sin? It is saying, "My sins are too dear to me to be at *present* forsaken; I greatly prefer the gratification of my inclinations, to what is called communion with God, and obedience to him!" A man who professes to believe the Bible, but lives in the habitual neglect of it, and in direct opposition to its dictates, practically declares, however strange the charge, that the pains of hell are more to be coveted than the pleasures of godliness!

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The vanity of every expedient short of Christ and his salvation, to relieve a guilty and miserable mind, is a truth that rises with irresistible evidence from the preceding narrative. God made our first parents upright. By disobeying his command, they lost at once their purity of character, and peace of mind; the enjoyment of his moral image, and a sense of his favourable presence. As guilty, they were banished from the enjoyment of his favour, as depraved they were averse to communion with God, and incapable of it. From Adam, our *apostate head*, guilt, condemnation, and misery, are entailed upon us. From Adam, as our *corrupt root*, we derive depravity of heart. Of this depraved, guilty, and miserable condition, nothing can effectually convince us, but "the Spirit of truth." When a man is made sensible of his real character, and most deplorable condition, then he beholds his *danger*, he *feels* his weakness; he is *too vile*, in his own apprehensions, to be capable of atoning for the least sin—he is *too weak*, to repent of past transgressions, and to conquer present temptations; and, instead of being relieved, his circumstances would become worse, if the same Spirit did not direct him, as a self-condemned sinner, to make application to an ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR. Through the instrumentality of "the truth," the distressed mind is led by this sacred agent, from all dependence on its own *wisdom*, or *worth*—from all confidence in its own *strength* or *works*, to a simple and entire confidence in Christ. This is *gradual* work. Many are the

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struggles, the hopes, and fears, the temptations and conflicts, the sinner experiences, before he submits to be saved, as helpless and miserable: but being savingly conducted to Christ, he receives *the forgiveness of all his sins*, through the redemption that is in him. He is now constituted *completely righteous*, through his *perfect obedience*, which he pleads as the ground of his justification, and he is enabled to rely on his mighty grace, in discharging his duty, in conquering his adversaries, subduing temptations, enjoying the promises, and in persevering to the end, in expectation of life eternal.

Such communications from Christ and his Spirit Mr. F. greatly needed. But, instead of these, in what manner did those around him attempt to relieve his distressed mind? One told him, "he was prepared to die." A second said, "You need not distress yourself, you have been a good liver." It was added, by a third, "You have led a good life." The clergyman likewise assured him he "had nothing to fear;" but what was all this better than telling a sick man he was well, or a dying man, that he was out of danger. Let us attend for a moment to the description given us in the sacred writings, of a man under sanctified sufferings. "His life draws near to the grave, and his soul to the destroyers. If there be a messenger (of God) with him; an interpreter (of God's word and Providence), one of a thousand, to shew unto man his (Jehovah's) uprightness, or righteousness (the righteousness of Christ imputed to be-
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lieving sinners, and the righteousness of his dispensations towards them), then he is gracious to him, and faith, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." This—this is what is above every thing needed, by a man under pungent afflictions, and especially in Mr. F.'s situation. A messenger of God—an interpreter of his word of grace to sinners—one who can point him, sinking in despondency, to a glorious *ransom*—to Jesus, who "gave his life a ransom for many." To JESUS! who "delivereth from the wrath to come"—who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," and who "is able to save, even to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him." Had the friends of the deceased directed him to rely, in all the confidence of faith, on such a suitable and all-sufficient SAVIOUR, who can tell but, receiving a sense of the remission of his sins, from the mercy of God, through the Redeemer's sacrifice, the distraction of his mind might have been prevented? I do not lay any stress on the following remark, but it is the opinion of one, who was a witness to the melancholy state of his mind, that "had it not been for his fears respecting futurity, he had been alive at this day." So far from having any to direct him to one who was "mighty to save," great pains were taken to persuade him that he was in no sort of *danger*. "You have led a good life—you need not fear;" and what was the consequence? He despaired. Had not, I would ask, such remarks a direct tendency to produce desperation? They cer-

tainly had; for he would naturally think that his friends would tell him nothing but truth, and endeavour to administer to him the strongest consolation in their power; and, of consequence, to let him know that "he had led a good life," was declaring, in other words, that to be the alone source of consolation, to which they had power or inclination to direct him.

But the poor, distressed anxious creature, being conscious that he had not led this good life they talked of, far, very far from it; the expedient they used, as might reasonably be supposed, utterly failed, and his wounded spirit sunk within him! Reader, if you should have a relative or friend, in sick and dying circumstances, beware of advising him to take shelter in such a "refuge of lies." Do not send for any one to pray with and comfort him, merely because he has been to an university, and has acquired a small portion of classical knowledge; but send for one who is experimentally acquainted with the "word of life"—who "knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," even though the world should brand him with the name of a *methodist*; for know, Reader, that a minister who is ignorant of spiritual things, and wholly absorbed in the love of the world, can say nothing but what will be productive of a false peace, or of black despair, each of which tends alike to prevent that repentance which is unto life. But is this the way to be instrumental in saving precious and immortal souls? No, it is murdering them, by keeping them ignorant of their imminent *danger*, and of their *only* remedy.

Friends,

Friends, and acquaintance, and medical gentlemen, who are strangers to experimental religion, may attempt to console their patients by flattering their characters,—by inspiring them with false hopes of recovery,—and by keeping from them the most distant hint about religion; but be it known to them, they are depriving such of the only infallible remedy, which the infinite wisdom and love of God have provided, and leaving them a prey to self-deception, and an impenitent heart. David, who was the subject of great afflictions, and, at times, of very strong convictions of sin, had his mind frequently calmed by the word of God. “Unless thy law had been my delight,” so he expresses himself, “I should have PERISHED in my affliction.”

*In vain the trembling conscience seeks
Some solid ground to rest upon,
With long despair the spirit breaks
Till we apply to Christ alone.*

Our next reflection may very properly be made upon *the sin and folly of charging derangement upon religion*. The absurdity of it is too glaring to be denied. For what is religion? Not a mere attachment to a party—the appearing at church or meeting in our best clothes on a sabbath-day—the being baptized, confirmed, and receiving the sacrament; not merely the hearing sermons, and saying forms of prayer, or hearing others pray without a form. Many pay an outward attention to these matters, whose cha-

rafters are truly despicable. One has been baptized and goes to church, but he is a glutton, and a drunkard, and seems to live merely to gratify his appetite. A second has been confirmed by the hand of a bishop, but in what? in his ignorance of God and himself—in his pride and self-conceit. He has been confirmed in a false opinion of his character, in his false hopes and false peace! Another boasts that he is a protestant, rather than a papist; he attends his church, but he is unfaithful to the marriage-bed—he is an adulterer or fornicator! “I was brought up to my church,” cries one, “I will never leave my *church*!” No, nor will he relinquish his *sins*. He is a cheat in his shop, a tyrant in his family, and loves any one better than a devout and serious Christian. In the church, you see the whole of his religion, for he has none in his family. It is all in *public*, and all in *appearance*; yet this passes, agreeably to the general idea, for religion. It is not uncommon to see some of these devout beings attending their *shops* on the Lord’s-day in the forenoon, then hurrying to church, and after dinner fauntering about the town or fields, forming parties of pleasure, very happy in frivolous chit-chat at their neighbour’s tea-table, and settling their accounts in the evening; these are, forsooth, religious people; and these very persons are offended with you, if you will not believe they are wonderfully pious, though against all the evidence you are able to collect. Such religion as *this* may, indeed, drive a man distracted in a dying hour, (such an hour, Reader, may

may be near to you), but this is not the religion of the Bible. A man may lose his senses for *want* of religion, but never through the rational and spiritual *influence* of it. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should never perish, but have everlasting life." When a sinner is convinced of his perishing condition—repents of his crimes—confides in the atonement and grace of a Redeemer—enjoys a sense of sin forgiven, the hope of eternal life—and walks with God, adjusting his temper and conduct by his word; *will* this, *can* this, do you imagine, divest a man of his reasoning powers? Yet this is religion, the religion of the Bible. Was it such a species of religion which reduced Mr. F. to the sad condition in which he was beheld? How, in the nature of the thing, could this be? for such a religion he never possessed. His professed sentiments, his pursuits, company, and pleasures, were all of a *worldly*, not of a religious nature. How absurd then is it for any of his friends to say, "*religion* drove him mad," when it was the object of his least concern, a subject of which he had less knowledge than of most things besides. To call his derangement a "religious phrenzy," is as criminal as absurd. Is it not an ungrateful reflection on the wisdom, the mercy, and the grace of God, from which the gospel originated? Is it not a vile slur on the redemption of Christ, the promises of God, and the operations of his Spirit? Who are they that attribute derangement to religion? Those men, most assuredly, who

do not understand its nature, who neglect the Bible, not for want of *evidence* of its authenticity, but because it is too *pure* in its precepts for their corrupt inclinations, and too *humbling* in its doctrines for their most abominable pride. A *religious phrenzy*! *Religion drove Mr. F. mad!* What! does the only wise and compassionate God, reveal a system of truths, with a view to deprive his intelligent creatures of their senses; some of whom are nearly distracted already, with a sense of their guilt, and the condemnation they have demerited? Does he mean to burlesque their misery, by calling this "the gospel," that is, "glad tidings!" Did the all-merciful Saviour bleed and die, to deprive sinners of their understanding? Do the promises of pardon, to a broken-hearted transgressor, through the sacrifice of Christ, promote distraction?—Hear what were those reflections which proved so distressing to the mind of poor Mr. F. "I have lived without attending to my soul, the Bible, or my Maker; I am now dying, and going to receive the reward of my awful neglect of God, and love of the world—I am lost for ever!" Yes, Reader, it was the fear of damnation; it was despair of mercy, which dethroned his reason; but despair is not religion; if it be, there is more religion in hell than on earth; for

*Darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there.*

Religion

Religion the cause of madness! None surely will affirm this, but those whose own heads are turned; whose hearts and conduct are most inimical to every thing serious. Go to yonder poor and half-starved man, and give him bread to satisfy his hunger; set the miserable captive at liberty; and put the king's pardon into the hands of a criminal under sentence of death;—will these things drive either of them mad? What does “the glorious gospel of the blessed God proclaim?—What, but a feast for the hungry mind, liberty to the captive, and pardon to the condemned, who savingly believe on the Son of God.”

*What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan;
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so SAFE to man,*

The gospel meets a sinner on *the brink of hell*, and encourages him to cast the anchor of hope upon a crucified and exalted SAVIOUR.

What madness is to be compared with that, of *presuming on a death-bed repentance*! It is easy to cry out in a season of health, *God is merciful*: but when conscience is roused by approaching dissolution—when some painful disease fastens upon the vitals of a thoughtless sinner, he may find it much easier to believe that God is *just*, and disposed to bring him to account for his sins, than mercifully inclined to pardon them. Are you sure that *your* circumstances,
when

when you come to die, will prove favourable to repentance? Think of Mr. F.'s case. See an attorney drawing up his last will, and conveying his property to others; see a physician turning pale by his bed-side; see relatives expressing by their countenances and tears, their hopeless apprehensions; see a body yielding to the pale conqueror; see Satan tempting him to despair of mercy; and see his soul going into the immediate presence of the Judge of quick and dead!—Were these things, so confounding to frail mortality, favourable to the exercise of *unfeigned* repentance? Remember, perhaps like you, Reader, he did not apprehend that death was so near!

Let it not be, on any account, forgotten, that repentance is the gift of Christ, and the effect of his grace; and is that grace at *your* command? If you slight the Saviour now, may he not justly retaliate, and despise your last fears and groans, cries and tears? May he not fulfil this threatening, "Because I called, and ye refused—I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your FEAR cometh;—then shall ye call upon me,—but I will NOT ANSWER! Ye shall seek me early; but—shall NOT FIND me." You may then be sorry for the *consequences* of the sins you love—sorry, that you are going to leave your property, your pleasures, your companions, and your follies; but you cannot sincerely repent of sin, by any natural power of your own. Little as you now suspect it, your greatest discouragement may arise from the *mercy* of God. That mercy, which you have *slighted* and
abused;

abused; that mercy, of which you have availed yourself, to live in the habits of sin, may then withdraw to an *inaccessible distance*; and whatever degrees of fortitude you may *now* possess, an apprehension of the awful approach of the *God of justice*, will cause you to tremble in every nerve. While “thy heart meditates terror, the fever may reach thy brain;” and can a madman repent, believe, or pray? Death-bed repentance! a sick bed repentance! Are you *sure* then, that death will arrest you through the medium of sickness? May not God “cut you off with a *stroke*?” And should your breath leave your body, before you are united to Christ, and reconciled to God, (how shall I write it?)—before your body is cold, your soul may be in HELL!

Learn *properly to estimate this world and its interests*. “Set not your affections,” inordinately, “on any thing under the sun.” Think of Mr. F. Are you young and healthy? So was he. Have you an advantageous business? So had he. Have you property to render your temporal circumstances easy? So had he. Do you enjoy the pleasures of the world, with companions of your own taste? So did he. But, I must remind you, Reader, that all his earthly enjoyments lay at the mercy of a cold! or rather, were all at the disposal of the great Sovereign of nature. This young man was seized with a cold and fever—death, at length, succeeded—tore him from the world, and “the place which once knew him, shall know him no more!”

more!" Uncertain life!—May my hopes and affections stretch *far* beyond thee; and rest only in an unchangeable and everlasting good! The Christian is the only happy man; for his felicity is not derived from any thing he can be deprived of, nor is it subject to vicissitude—he is safe—safe for an ETERNITY. The man of the world may dream of a long and undisturbed continuance here; and supposing that he has here a "continuing city," he seeks not one to come. He flatters himself, that to-morrow will be as to-day. Whilst he views his earthly accommodations, and says "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry; thou hast goods laid up for many years:" that most terrible sound may alarm him, "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee!"

Behold the tremendous consequences of stifling convictions, and of being ashamed to acknowledge the truth. Mr. F. had frequently conversed with me on various important sacred truths. But whatever conviction he received, to me he never acknowledged it. In his late illness it appeared that his mind had been deeply impressed, at different times, by my conversation. He declared that, "if he recovered, he would confess it to me." Why did he conceal, and live contrary to his convictions? His pride, which occasioned him to be afraid and ashamed of *Methodist*, concealed the truth. At length the day of trial came; and *conscience*, roused from its stupor, demanded a hearing, it repeated its heavy charges; and behold! *truth* at once triumphed

triumphed over fear and pride and shame! The truth was discovered, and proved, to demonstration, what counterfeit blessedness the worldling is in possession of.

*Thus aching bosoms wear a visage gay,
And stifled groans, frequent the ball and play.*

Reader, are you ashamed of Christ? ashamed of reading your Bible; of praying in your family; associating with good men, as your favourite companions? ashamed to spend the Lord's-day in the noble exercises of devotion, lest you should be called a faint, a precise and formal creature, or a Methodist? Is a laugh an argument which you cannot answer? Will you neglect your Bible, your Maker, your soul and its salvation, to please a creature? a creature, too, who is as unwise, and unhappy as yourself, and whose breath is in his nostrils? What! do you prefer the favour of man, to the approbation of your conscience and of your Judge? — Do you fear the frown of a perishing creature, more than the frown of an infinite God? Talk no more, I beseech you, of your good sense, your reason, and your wisdom; for, however wise you may be thought by those who applaud your conduct because it countenances their own criminal actions, know assuredly, that your folly will, ere long, be exposed before men and angels! Where is the *Reason* you so much boast of, if you are
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more afraid of the word *Methodist*, than of losing your soul? Will the name of Churchman, of Dissenter, of Methodist, or even of *Christian*, alter your character, or affect your eternal condition? Are you more afraid of being laughed at for following Christ, than of being damned for neglecting him? Are you ashamed of conversing about God, the salvation of Christ, and the Bible, in the presence of your companions? Remember that weighty sentence, "He who is ashamed of ME and of MY WORDS, before men," mark this, Reader; ashamed of Christ and his words, BEFORE MEN; "of him will I also be ashamed, before my Father and his holy angels?" Are you afraid of the displeasure or scorn of an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, husband or friend? "He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, houses or lands, more than me," says the same divine speaker, "cannot be my my disciple." In vain do you pretend to conceal your heart from him who will be your judge, who will judge "the *secrets* of men." If you should be wrong at last, can your father or mother, or any relation or friend, be *condemned* for you? Reader, hear, and judge then for yourself. Harken to your Bible, and to your conscience; earnestly implore the SAVIOUR of sinners, to manifest to your heart the knowledge of *himself*, and the things which belong to your everlasting peace.

Christian—*Here is a loud call to faithfulness* to your God and Redeemer, and to the souls of your fellow-creatures. Little did I think of the good effect which
my

my conversation had produced on the mind of Mr. F I have seen him frequently, it is true, make a long and anxious pause, change his countenance, and heave a sigh; I feared the impressions were entirely effaced by the influence of worldly connections; but truth—revealed, divine, irresistible truth, had taken possession of his mind; and, whatever appearance he might assume, he felt, I question not, what to me he never acknowledged. Be faithful, my dear Reader, to God, and to your own conscience. Expose error, and vindicate truth, by your words and by your actions. Exert all your influence to bring sinners under the sound of the gospel, and to peruse their Bible. Lend, or give them Bibles, or any other profitable books, if they need them. Guard against the guilt of *hindering* any one from attending the means of salvation. Who can say what blessings may accompany your conversation, to prevent the progress of sin and error, and to bring sinners to Christ! Be not ashamed of your Master, nor a shame to him, by a cold indifference to his word, and to his honour. Speak and work for God, while you enjoy the light of scripture, the day of health and life. The night of disease, perhaps of mental derangement, and certainly the night of death, will quickly come, when no man can work. Life, and its golden opportunities, are passing rapidly away, and soon, very soon, your fellow-creatures will be for ever beyond the influence of your tongue, and of your example. Be firm and faithful, cool and prudent; and think not that the sneer of an adversary is any proof
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that he does not *feel* what you say. His laugh, like the smooth surface of a watch, *conceals* the various movements within. Beware of resentment, if he does not yield at once to the force of truth. Pity him, pray for him; and adore that power and grace which have made *you* to differ.

Believer, you will soon have finished your course of duty and suffering. Disease and death are around you; and perhaps there is but a step between you and the eternal world. Should it be so, that your warfare is nearly accomplished, and all your concern with the present state drawing to a period, yet fear not. It is a serious thing to die; nature shrinks from it, and "fears to launch away;" but take courage, Christian! Death is a *conquered* enemy; Jesus has disarmed it of its power to hurt any of his disciples. "The sting of death is sin:" but through the great Atonement, received by faith, the heart is blessed with a sense of *complete forgiveness*; and by the Holy Spirit revealing Christ to the conscience, it is delivered from the *dominion* of sin. "The strength of sin is the law:" but our illustrious Surety, having obeyed its *commands*, and endured its *curse*, is become "the END of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." If, while we receive forgiveness through the blood of Christ, the lineaments of the blessed Jesus are drawn upon us, we may adopt the words of the triumphant apostle, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Victory! victory! O redeemed soul! Victory over sin, and death, and hell! Victory, not through
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any *worthiness* of your own, but, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory, not by any *strength* of your own; for, HE *giveth* us the victory. Now, follow the ascending soul, blessed with the conquest of all his enemies, and behold him mingling his joys, his services, and his songs, with those of the spirits of just men made perfect!

Soul concerns are the noblest of all concerns. Who is the less healthy, or the less happy, for walking with God; for imitating the example of the Lord Jesus; and for adjusting his temper and conduct by the dictates of the book of God? The more reluctant your heart is now, to the great concerns of religion, the more difficult you will find it to turn your attention to them in a trying hour. Ah! what hard work did poor Mr. F. find prayer to be, when struggling with disease and grappling with "the king of terrors." He had no acquaintance, from past *experience*, with God, in a Redeemer. Prayer was at last a work of necessity; it was a new and strange work to him. Now he cries, "Mr. C. is right, and, if I recover, I will attend his ministry." Now the objects—the comparative trifles of time, which had so long employed his attention, and enslaved his heart, *recede*; and the weighty thoughts of God and the Bible, of heaven and hell, of salvation and damnation, occupy his soul. Take a view of this intelligent, this dying young gentleman, who had been a spectator of many in the arms of death—see the man, who at first had been kept from a regular attendance at the established church, through his prejudices against

the *clergy*; and from a dissenting place of worship, through a strong aversion to the term *Methodist*—view him now! and all the little distinctions of names and parties are utterly lost—lost in the deep impressions he felt of the awful, yet delightful, realities of an invisible, and eternal world!

Perhaps, Reader, you now and then indulge yourself in this soliloquy, “Thank God, I am not like Mr. F. in my religious sentiments; I am not a deist; I believe my Bible.” And do you, indeed, believe the word of God to be true? What *proof* are you able to produce of this assertion? You profess to believe in God’s revealed will; but profession, remember, is not *faith*. You constantly attend the church or meeting, as your parents have done before you; but this is no certain proof of your faith in Christ; for, are not Papists, Turks and Pagans, attentive to the duties of their different religions? It may be, you sometimes please yourself with the idea, that you are not living in whoredom, drunkenness, injustice, and similar evils; that you do not quote the scriptures in every company, to enliven the mirth of fools; nor can you join the silly, or the audacious laugh, which many indulge, at serious things, or pious characters. This, indeed, is more than many of your neighbours can say: but it is no proof of your faith in Christ. A Christian *must* be a moral man; but how many persons, who are truly moral, are strangers to genuine Christianity? It is possible you may be *reformed* in your conduct; but reformation is not *regeneration*.

You

You may be *another* man ; but not a *new* man. You may change your sentiments and improve your behaviour, but not experience that great and spiritual change in your heart which our Saviour describes in those memorable words, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again." However decent your outward behaviour may be, if your *heart* is yet unhumbled, impure, and impenitent, if your *heart* is not devoted to God, as your highest, and only-satisfying good, you are, after all, but " like polished marble ; you have lost your *roughness*, but not your *coldness* and *hardness*." Were you really converted to God, this promise of grace would have been fulfilled in your happy experience, " I will take away the stony heart, and will give you an heart of flesh."

These lines, it is very likely, may meet the eye of some *young* man, whose body is healthy, whose heart is proud of his person and accomplishments, who is corrupt in his conversation, dexterous at an oath, and who can raise a calumny on a serious character, and say, he heard it—laugh at it himself, and think it amazingly clever, because his weak companions laugh too. The example of a youth of this description, is more carefully to be avoided than the pestilence ; and let him remember, he must one day answer for his words and actions, and feel the tremendous consequences of ruining the souls of *others*, as well as his *own*. O vain creature ! all my concern for your real welfare has, perhaps, very little effect. You bid defiance to scripture, to conscience, and to God. To whom,

think you, would your absence from the world be the most trifling loss? Who is, in the smallest degree, benefited by your conversation or example? Brave young man! You can laugh aloud at those poor fools, as you call them, who unite in addressing their Maker, their Redeemer, and friend, in a solemn prayer and a hymn of praise; you can ridicule them who read their Bibles, attend the ministry of the word, and converse of the things which belong to their peace; and do you, indeed, expect that the just and holy God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," will express his approbation of you *here*, or reward you with heaven *hereafter*? Go on, O champion of sin and Satan! proceed in your mad career of opposition to God, in your contempt of the Bible, and hatred of every thing good. "Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that, for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment."

Are you, Reader, one whose conscience in time past has been convinced and alarmed, by warnings from scripture; by the experience and conversation of good men; by the confessions of bad men; by your own afflictions, or the afflictions and death of your neighbours?—and have you made a resolution to read the book of God, to pray in secret, to hear the gospel, to speak well of those who are truly pious? Well—what has since made you so indifferent to those exercises? What! have you discovered that the Bible

is false, that religion is a farce, and that happiness is to be found in the ways of the world, and the practice of sin? and are you, by such an example, *infecting* others? "Your last state is worse than the first." May God enable you to carry the following words every where along with you! "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed; and that, without remedy."

Remember, too, that *hypocrisy* is a dreadful evil. You profess to love the Bible; but do you esteem it for its humbling doctrines, its pure commands, and its promises of assistance against sin? If the sabbath is a *fine day*, you can visit your pew, for an hour, in the parish church; and return with an accurate account of the different dresses you have there seen. Have you not many times attended divine worship, let *conscience* speak, rather to be admired than to adore your Maker?—and being glad when the service was over, how frequently have you invited a party of worldly companions to dine with you; and wholly occupied the remainder of the sabbath in unedifying, impertinent, and trifling conversation. Say, is this what you call *religion*! and do you not blush to call it by so venerable a name? Can you think to impose this upon "the God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed," for *genuine religion*? Like a fine lady, deceiving herself and the congregation, while

"Her lifted fan, to give a solemn air,

"Conceals her face, which passes for a prayer."

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Such a *fashionable* religion may suit a depraved and vain heart, but it will not bear the scrutiny of reason, of scripture, of severe affliction, or of a dying bed.

Perhaps you are ready to reply, that you are not a *churchman*; that you cannot bear a minister who is destitute of "the key of knowledge," a minister who loves his pleasure more than his work; and who dresses like a beau; and is as much, nay, more in his element, at the race-ground, the card-table, the ball, or the play, than in the pulpit. You, for your part, read your Bible, judge for yourself, and pity the ignorance, and self-righteous pride of these pharisees and hypocrites. Well—the members of the church of England *dissent* from the church of Rome, and you are a dissenter from the church of England; but assure yourself, if, under this profession, your heart is unsanctified, and sin is unsubdued, you are also at enmity with Christ's commands, his grace, and Spirit, and with a holy, humble, heavenly conversation. In vain the churchman dissents from the papist, in vain another dissents from the churchman, if neither departs from *sin* and *sinners*:
For

*God is the Judge of hearts; no fair disguises
Can screen the guilty, when his vengeance rises.*

Reader, are you truly convinced of your sinful and guilty condition as a fallen creature? Do you feel that you are a transgressor of the *divine law*; that you have failed in your duty both to God and man? Do you tremble at that sentence, "Cursed is every one that
continueth

continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them?" Does your *heart* condemn you, under convictions of the truth, and of the Spirit of God? and are you anxious for the forgiveness of your sins, and the salvation of your soul? "Fear not, for behold! I bring you glad tidings; for unto you is born a SAVIOUR, who is Christ the Lord." Through this gracious Mediator, who, as the SURETY of his people, had all their sins charged upon him, and who bore the punishment due to them, divine compassion is extended, transgressions of every possible description are forgiven, justice is satisfied, the sinner plucked from the jaws of hell, and elevated to all the felicity of heaven. Yes, anxious Reader, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing and forsaking your sins, you shall assuredly find mercy—mercy to pardon them—to pardon them every one—to pardon them for ever. The promise will never be revoked, throughout all generations, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The fears of a self-condemned sinner, very frequently are, that God will remember his iniquities against him—that he will mark his transgressions and punish him; his heart is overwhelmed with the fear of death, of judgment, and eternity; but when God forgives the returning prodigal, what transporting tidings! his sins and his iniquities he remembers no more. He views him in the righteousness of the Redeemer, "without spot, blemish, or any such thing." If, through grace, you are enabled to return

to God, confiding in the great propitiation, acknowledging and relinquishing your past sins, and "yielding yourself" to Father, Son, and Spirit, as your Sovereign, your Saviour, and your Rest, "you shall be saved"—saved from the curse, the guilt, the dominion of sin—"saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation, and shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end!"

Recollect, Reader, you have had another *warning*. Do not pass an opinion upon this pamphlet till you have entered into a serious examination of your *heart*. You are liable every day to be seized by almost a thousand diseases. Look a little before you—yonder comes one who will try your character, your condition, and your courage.—He is marching on towards you, and makes a rapid progress. He spares neither rich nor poor, old nor young. Who is it? It is *Death*!—irresistible, unrelenting DEATH! For, "it is appointed to men once to die," (prepared or unprepared), "and afterwards—afterwards—the judgment." There both I, the writer, and you, the reader, of these lines, must quickly meet. May it be to give up our account with joy and not with grief! Amen.

THE END.

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